District School Board Ontario North East is pleased to provide this handbook as a resource for teachers in grades 7-12 to aid in instruction in Writing Across the Curriculum.

The teaching strategies in this handbook will allow all teachers to help students write the following:

- a supported opinion piece
- an information paragraph
- a summary
- a news report

This resource handbook provides sample instructional plans that all teachers can use to help students develop and reinforce effective writing skills.

District School Board Ontario North East particularly would like to thank those involved in the design of this useful handbook: John Foster, Sarah Hick

Curriculum Department
District School Board Ontario North East
January, 2002
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INTRODUCTION

Students use writing in most subject areas for a range of purposes. Writing may be used to clarify understanding, to communicate ideas and opinions, to summarize factual and technical information, to inform and persuade, and to entertain.

The four types of writing described in this resource booklet have many applications across various subject areas.

They are: a supported-opinion piece
an information paragraph
a summary
a news report

It is hoped that this resource document will provide all classroom teachers with assistance in their planning process and ensure that students receive consistent and ongoing support and instruction in these four types of writing. By integrating these four types of writing into various subject areas, students will have an opportunity to practice and refine their writing skills. A common set of criteria for effective writing in these areas can be applied throughout a school thus ensuring that students have multiple opportunities to apply these skills resulting in improved performance in all subject areas.

WRITING PROCESS

The instructional plans for the four types of cross-curricular writing described in this resource booklet are based on the stages in the writing process. All students should be familiar with this process. While the stages are outlined in a linear fashion, it is important to note that the process is recursive and that each stage may be repeated one or more times as writers strive to communicate their ideas and information.

The stages in the process include:

Prewriting: Generating ideas and planning the writing.
Drafting: Using the ideas and plan to produce a draft.
Revising: Reviewing the criteria for an effective piece of writing and making necessary changes to the draft.
Editing: Using available resources (dictionaries, thesaurus, peer editor) to correct grammar, punctuation and spelling.
Publishing: Completing a final copy of the writing that reflects a writer's best work.
WRITING SKILLS

Regardless of the type of writing, the following skills are important to successful writing:

1) Developing a Main Idea
2) Providing Supporting Details
3) Organizing and Linking Ideas and Information
4) Using Appropriate Tone for the Purpose and Intended Readers
5) Using correct Grammar and Punctuation
6) Using Correct Spelling

To provide a range of opportunities to demonstrate the aforementioned writing skills, the Secondary School Literacy Test required four tasks that are cross-curricular in nature. They are representative of writing expectations across the compulsory subject areas and in daily life.

The tasks are:
- Writing a series of paragraphs supporting an opinion
- Writing an information paragraph
- Writing a summary
- Writing a news report

This resource booklet provides sample instructional plans that all teachers can use to help students develop and reinforce effective skills in these four types of writing.

It is suggested that school literacy teams plan writing activities across subjects and grades so that students have many opportunities to develop writing skills. The following chart may help to facilitate this planning. Teams can identify opportunities for the four types of writing in various subject areas. Consideration should be given to providing a balance and reasonable number of writing opportunities.
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WRITING A SERIES OF PARAGRAPHS SUPPORTING AN OPINION

DEFINITION: Supported Opinion pieces require the writer to express a personal opinion on a topic and provide supporting details (proof, facts, examples, etc.) that explain and support that opinion.

APPLICATION: This type of writing is important across all subject areas. Depending on the intended audience, it can take many forms. Examples include: persuasive essay, letter to the editor, advertisement or debate.

LINK TO SECONDARY SCHOOL LITERACY TEST

The series of paragraphs supporting an opinion is one of the four writing assignments on the test. Students are given a topic and required to write a multi-paragraph piece expressing an opinion and supporting that opinion with supporting details. A sample assignment is provided in Appendix A1.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Pre-Writing: PART A

The teacher introduces the format for writing a series of paragraphs supporting an opinion:

1. Opening Paragraph - states the opinion and lists the supporting details.

2. Body of the Essay - one or more paragraphs
   - explain and provide proof for each supporting detail
   - end each paragraph with a link to the next

3. Concluding Paragraph - sum up the opinion and restate the most important supporting argument.

Pre-Writing: PART B

Use an organizer (see Appendix A2) and model the development of an opinion with proof and explanation.

\[
\text{e.g.} \quad \text{OPINION} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{Supporting detail proof} \\
\text{explanation} \\
\text{Supporting detail proof} \\
\text{explanation} \\
\text{Supporting detail proof} \\
\text{explanation}
\end{array}
\]
Pre-Writing:  PART C

Using a topic currently under study, the teacher has students engage in brainstorming, discussion, or research to determine a topic.

or

Using a unit currently under study, the teacher assigns a topic requiring students to give an opinion and support it.

Drafting: PART A

Prior to beginning drafting, the teacher provides students with the following criteria for an effective supported-opinion writing piece: (see Appendix A3)

1) The opening paragraph clearly states the opinion and indicates the supporting arguments.

2) Each subsequent paragraph provides proof and illustration of one supporting argument.

3) Each paragraph ends with a sentence that links it to the next paragraph.

4) The concluding paragraph restates the opinion and emphasizes the most important supporting argument.

5) Grammar, spelling and punctuation are correct.

Drafting: PART B

1. Students use a visual organizer (planner) to plan their series of paragraphs.

   Insert new planner See Appendix A2

2. Using their plan as a guide, students write a series of paragraphs supporting an opinion.

   Revising   Teachers review the revision checklist (Appendix A3) and students work in pairs to reread their pieces and make any necessary changes.

   Editing     Teachers instruct students to work with a partner to ensure correct spelling, punctuation and grammar.

   Publishing Students prepare a “final copy” of their piece to be shared with an appropriate audience, e.g. teacher, editor, local politician, etc.
WRITING AN INFORMATION PARAGRAPH

DEFINITION: An information paragraph is an objective presentation of facts and information. Possible subjects could include a person, a place, an event, an activity, a natural or scientific phenomenon, etc.

APPLICATION: This type of writing is important across all subject areas. Information paragraphs are the building blocks of research and report writing common to most subject curricula. By focusing on a single paragraph, students can learn organizational skills and patterns necessary for success on research reports.

LINK TO SECONDARY SCHOOL LITERACY TEST

The informational paragraph is one of the four writing assignments on the test. While most classroom writing will require students to gather information, on the test the students are given the information and must select one “aspect” of the topic and use supporting details from a list of information to develop the paragraph A sample assignment is provided in Appendix B1.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Integration with Reading

Information paragraphs will develop out of the study of content material and most often will be dependent upon a reading passage or media presentation. See Activity A7 – Group Summarizing in the Reading Across the Curriculum – Resource Booklet portion of this document for a detailed description of a group summarizing lesson.

Pre-Writing: PART A

1. Introduce a reading or media selection to the students. Direct students to read or view the material with a focus on the most important information.
2. After students have read or viewed the material, ask them to brainstorm a list of the most important information.
3. Review this list as a class, and organize the information into a number of categories or aspects. Each of these categories will form the basis for one information paragraph.

e.g.
Pre-Writing: PART B

Introduces the format for an information paragraph:

1) Opening sentence - clearly states the main idea of the paragraph
2) Body of the paragraph - includes supporting details to develop the main idea
3) Concluding sentence - sums up and restates the main idea (see Appendix B2)

Drafting

Assign students one category (aspect) of the information recorded in the Pre-Writing activities and have them draft an information paragraph. You may choose to make this part of a class summarizing activity and assign categories to groups of students to ensure that all aspects of the topic are covered.

Prior to assigning the drafting of the paragraph the teacher reviews and provides the students with the criteria for an effective information paragraph: (see Appendix B2)

1) The topic sentence clearly states the main idea.
2) The detail sentences develop the main idea.
3) The concluding sentence “sums up” and restates the main idea.
4) Ideas are organized clearly so that the reader can follow and understand the paragraph.
5) Grammar, spelling and punctuation are correct.

Revising and Editing:

Review the “Revising and Editing An Information Paragraph Checklist”(Appendix B2) and have students work in pairs to reread their drafts and make any necessary changes.

Publishing:

Students produce “final copies” of their paragraphs. Students can share their paragraphs so that everyone has a full summary of the topic.
WRITING A SUMMARY

DEFINITION: A summary is a retelling of the main ideas of a text.

APPLICATION: This type of writing has applications across most subject areas. Tasks may include summarizing for the purpose of note-taking or summarizing for the purpose of clarifying and communicating the ideas in an article, an essay, or a textbook chapter.

LINK TO SECONDARY SCHOOL LITERACY TEST

Students are given a short text of approximately 200 words and are asked to write a summary in which they express a main idea and at least two supporting details from the text. The summary should be 50 to 100 words. The summary is a common requirement for most school subjects. A sample assignment is provided in Appendix C1.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Integration with Reading

In classroom situations, summary writing will be done in response to assigned readings. For reading activities that focus on summarizing information see Activity A1, A7, A8 in the Reading Across the Curriculum Resource Booklet portion of this document.

Pre-Writing:

The first step in writing the summary involves reading the text and finding the main ideas and supporting details.

Finding the Main Idea & Supporting Details

i) Skim: Skim-read the entire text. Keep in mind the questions—
   What is the article all about?
   What is its purpose?

ii) Scan: Re-read the entire text to ensure understanding and the main idea.

iii) Topic: After scanning the text, write briefly in one or two sentences what the text is about. This is called the thesis or topic sentence. To double-check the thesis, concentrate mainly on the first and last sentence of the first and last paragraph. This is generally where the main idea is clearly expressed.

iv) Marking: For each paragraph, keeping the author’s main point in mind, underline or highlight key words, or jot summary notes, words or ideas in the margins. Select the words or phrases that give the most important information. Again note that the first and last lines of each paragraph usually contain the main supporting thought for that paragraph.
**Drafting & Revising PART A**

Given the nature of writing a summary, the DRAFTING and REVISING stages of the writing process are combined in this description. The following sequence of activities will provide students with strategies to assist them in their writing.

**Sum-up:** For each paragraph, read the underlined words and/or phrases to get the important details for that paragraph. Using the margin notes and perhaps some of the selected words, write 1-2 sentences that summarize the main idea for each paragraph. These sentences are *general statements*. The students are not permitted to include their personal viewpoints. They must stay true to the text as they are restating the text, not commenting on it. The author’s tone or attitude should still be evident in the summary.

Suggest to students that they should put the original text aside when writing the summary sentences. This may help them avoid simply copying from the text. When a phrase of three or more words is used, the students must quote it following the rules for direct quotations.

**Drafting & Revising PART B**

*Combine and Compress:* The sentences made from each paragraph will form the summary. However, unless some combining is done, the summary will be a series of choppy, individual sentences. Many of the sentences can be combined using conjunctions, participles or infinitives. Adding their own words when combining sentences can also ensure flow and coherence of the ideas being expressed. Again, ensure that students are not including personal opinions or original ideas. Sometimes, using fancy words and sentence combining can change the meaning. As well, students must be careful not to repeat any ideas or to include any examples from the text. Some helpful phrases include:

- According to the author,
- The author says/states,
- The author points out

**Drafting & Revising PART C**

*Organize:* The summary should have a beginning, a middle and an ending.

*Introduction*

- The introduction consists of the thesis or topic sentence, which will make the purpose of the text abundantly clear.
- The author, the text title and source should be identified and can be included as part of the topic sentence.

  i.e. According to [author] in [text title] [thesis].
- Again, this first paragraph will only be one or two sentences in length.
The Body

- The body will present the facts or supporting details as they appear in the text
- Only the present tense is used
- It is written in the student’s own words
- Continually mentions the author’s name

Conclusion

- The last sentence will present the author’s final comments.
- Summarizes the main idea
- Includes the author’s viewpoint
- The length of the summary may be up to 1/3 the length of the original text.

Bibliography

A full bibliographic citation must be included. Write it at the top or the bottom of the page that contains the summary. Follow the current APA format for citing the source.

example:


Revising & Editing

Check/Compare: Have students work with a partner to compare the summary with the original passage. Use the “Revising and Editing Checklist for a Summary” (Appendix C2) as a tool to assist students with this process.

Publishing

Students produce a “final copy” of the summary to be shared with an appropriate audience.

In addition to their academic value to individual students, summaries can be assigned to groups of students in the class and shared to create study materials.
WRITING A NEWS REPORT

DEFINITION: An article which presents key information about a recent event.

APPLICATION: News articles can be used in most subject areas to have students summarize information or describe famous events or discoveries from a news reporting point of view.

LINK TO SECONDARY SCHOOL LITERACY TEST

In the Secondary School Test, students are given a photograph and a headline. They are asked to develop a newspaper-style report. This task reflects the significance of media in contemporary daily life and the fact that it is one of the four strands in the Grade 9 English curriculum. A sample assignment is provided in Appendix D1.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Pre-Writing: PART A - Finding the Main Idea

*Establish a topic/theme*
Teachers can provide the student with a topic, or have them choose a topic on their own. Topics may include descriptions of newsworthy events that have taken place in the subject area under study. e.g. an event in a novel, an historical crisis, a scientific discovery etc.

*Narrow the focus*
Once the topic has been chosen, the student must brainstorm the details they would like to research or the questions they would like answered. An organizer based on the *Five W’s + H* is a good way to do this. (Appendix D2)

THE FIVE “W”S + H

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Pre-Writing: PART B - Central Idea

Once the students can answer the W5 + H, they can determine the central idea or issue of their topic. All the information that has been gathered can be narrowed down further to one single dominant issue. This central idea will be a theme that will draw and connect all the key details and gathered information together.

To focus or find the main ideas students should ask:

- What is the point of it all?
- What is the ‘news’ here?
- What is the story about?
- What stands out - is at attention?

Drafting PART A – Organize

Remind students - to stay focused on their main ideas
- to report their findings with a specific question in mind:
  “What does the reader want or need to know?”

Journalists often use what is called the inverted pyramid theory as a guide to writing an article and a means of attracting the reader’s attention.

- Have students sort through the information and outline or list the most important points.
- Students number the points in order of importance.
- The article will begin with the most important fact(s) descending to the least important information in the last paragraph.
- Each point will represent a paragraph.

Drafting PART B - Lead Sentence

Sometimes called the ‘Wow’ or ‘Whoa’ statement because this is the sentence that will attract the reader and will either make them say “Wow” or cause them to pause (Whoa!) and read. This statement is very similar to a headline. It must grab the reader’s attention by being simple, catchy and specific, yet remain focussed directly on the main issue.
One method for writing a catchy lead sentence is to make the students feel that what they are sharing is a juicy tidbit of gossip. Like saying; “Hey, guess what?” “Hey did you know?” “Did you hear?”

*The lead is short; one or two sentences are enough.*

Sometimes students may get stumped on a catchy lead. They can always come back to it later.

**Drafting PART C - Nutgraph**

This paragraph, which follows the lead, represents the core or the nut of the story. It describes the event and the reason for it being written. Once the students have the reader’s attention they must let them know what the whole article is about. Writers take the W5 + H and turn it into a simple and concise paragraph.

Who:
What:
When:
Where:
Why:
How:

**Drafting PART D - The Body**

i) Each paragraph in the body represents a key detail that the student has deemed important and necessary to share in order to represent the whole story. Again, following the inverted pyramid theory, the paragraphs are ordered from the most to least important detail.

ii) *Each paragraph summarizes yet describes the situation or issue.* Be sure that students are not writing a story; there is no need for elaborate, cryptic or flowery language. Their writing should be bold and to the point. This is not an invitation to be boring, but the point is to inform, not entertain, the audience. Students can describe the details matter-of-factly and still impress a powerful image upon the reader. The language should be simple, concise and understandable. Sentences should be short and snappy, limited to one thought or idea.

iii) The article should include the use of direct quotes. Quotes are used to enhance and strengthen the understanding of the issue for the reader. Quotes are not used to write the article. Sources being quoted must be fully identified: their name, occupation and relation to the event.

iv) The article must be balanced. This means all points of view must be considered and presented in the article. Students must realize that they are accounting the details of an issue or event and their personal views and opinions are not permitted. When they gather the information and present it, they must report fairly and accurately all sides and angles of the issue. Everyone has an equal voice. It is up to the reader to formulate an informed decision based upon the article.
**Drafting  PART E - Final Paragraph**

The final paragraph summarizes the key information and leaves a lasting impression.

**Drafting  PART F - Headline**

The headline is similar but separate from the lead sentence.

- Write it in the present tense
- Use short active verbs
- Do not repeat the lead
- Summarize what is ‘newsy’
- Play off well-known phrases

**Editing/Revising**

Students should work with a partner and use the “Editing and Revising a News Report Checklist” (Appendix D3) to improve and correct the news report.

**Publishing**

Students should prepare a final draft to share with an appropriate audience. If news reporting was done as a class assignment to review a large topic or unit, the individual articles could be published in a class newspaper.
When writing your series of paragraphs expressing an opinion, consider the following points:

- Include a statement of your series of paragraphs.
- Provide information and ideas that support your opinion in the paragraphs in the body of your opinion piece.
- Use the last paragraph to sum up or conclude your opinion.
- Include enough sentences in each paragraph to clearly develop your ideas.
- Use connecting words between ideas, sentences and paragraphs to help the reader follow and understand your opinion.
- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation so that your opinion is clearly presented and easy to read.
- You may give your opinion piece a title.

Task: Write a series of paragraphs (a minimum of three) expressing an opinion on the topic below. Develop your main idea with supporting details.

Purpose and Audience: an adult who is interested in your opinion

Topic: Is it a good idea to have a part-time job before graduating from high school?

From EQAO sample materials
## REVISING AND SUPPORTING A SUPPORTED OPINION

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<th>SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT</th>
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<td>2. each subsequent paragraph provides proof and illustration of one supporting argument</td>
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<td>3. each paragraph ends with a sentence that links it to the next paragraph</td>
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<td>4. the concluding paragraph restates the opinion and emphasizes the most important supporting argument</td>
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<td>5. grammar, spelling and punctuation are correct</td>
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APPENDIX B1

INFORMATION PARAGRAPH

When you write your well-constructed information paragraph, consider the following points:

• Before you begin to write, choose at least four related details (facts and information) from the list provided in order to write a unified paragraph.

• Identify the main idea of your paragraph in the topic sentence.

• Include at least four supporting details that develop the topic sentence. Provide a concluding sentence for your paragraph.

• Use connecting words between ideas and sentences to help the reader follow and understand the information in your paragraph.

• Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation so that your paragraph is clear and easy to read.

• You may give your writing a title that indicates the main idea or focus of your paragraph.
Task: Write one well-constructed information paragraph. Include a topic sentence, supporting details and a concluding sentence. You must use at least four details from the list below, focussing on one aspect of the topic.

Purpose and Audience: to provide information to an adult

Topic: Reginald Aubrey Fessenden

- played violin in first public radio broadcast
- nicknamed by Thomas Edison: Fezzie
- his dream: transmitting words without wires
- he is the “father of radio”
- inventor of fathometer, measuring ocean depth
- childhood spent in Southern Ontario
- built the first power-generating plant at Niagara Falls
- in 1927, obtained patent for early version of the television
- died July 22, 1932
- a little-known Canadian inventor
- born October 6, 1866, in Quebec
- worked with Thomas Edison
- in 1900, first transmission of voice without wires
- improved Edison’s electric light bulb
- innovative and persevering
- at age 10, witnessed Alexander Graham Bell’s experiments
- excellent in mathematics, language and music
- first public broadcast on radio in 1906
- over 500 inventions patented
- six years of work to realize his dream
- inventor of microphotography
- invented early version of the radio
- professor at a university in the United States from 1892 to 1900
- created basic concepts of radar
# APPENDIX B2

## REVISING AND EDITING AN INFORMATION

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<td>2. the detail sentences develop the main idea</td>
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<td>3. the conclusion sentence &quot;sums up&quot; the main idea</td>
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<td>4. ideas are organized clearly so that the paragraph is easy to follow</td>
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<td>5. grammar, spelling and punctuation are correct</td>
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A summary is a concise version of an original text. The summary you will write on the Grade 10 test requires you to summarize a text of approximately 200 words in 50 to 100 words.

When writing your summary, consider the following points:

- Before you begin to write, identify the main idea of the selection and two supporting details to include in your summary.

- You may underline, circle or use the Notes space provided to plan, but write your summary in the lined space provided.

- When writing a summary, you can reduce the number of words in several ways. These include leaving out nonessential information, using one general word to substitute for several specific words, reducing the number of examples, leaving out unnecessary words, etc.

- To help the reader follow and understand the ideas in your summary, use appropriate connecting words.

- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation so that your summary is clear and easy to read.
Shaking Up the Local Music Scene

After studying how to start a business in her Grade 12 economics class, Shannon Grant decided that she and her brother Ryan could start one themselves. In 1988, with a Student Venture loan, they opened Few and Far Between, an independent CD store, and began to revolutionize the North Bay scene.

Shannon and Ryan are not only business partners, they are best friends and make music together in their band, Whoopty Doo. They play the violin and piano and taught themselves how to play the guitar. These gifted musicians have won awards at Kiwanis competitions and performed in musical events such as Rockfest and Unplugged.

The siblings even share favourite bands and influences – Radiohead, Pearl Jam, Pennywise and NOFX – so of course their store specializes in alternative rarities, imports and B-sides.

Few and Far Between played a part in making North Bay music history. Shannon was a volunteer with North Bay’s first annual Summer Festivus in Lee Park in August 1998, which showcased local bands from punk to industrial.

Shannon was considering a career in business at the beginning of the summer. Now the 18-year-old is sure about her future. She will apply to a university business and communications program. Sixteen-year-old Ryan, who is entering Grade 11, still has time to decide what to do after he graduates from high school.
## REVISING AND EDITING A SUMMARY

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<tr>
<td>2. the last sentence presents the author's final comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. the main ideas have been included in the summary</td>
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<td>4. sentences flow smoothly</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. where necessary, shorter sentences have been combined</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. spelling, grammar and punctuation are correct</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D1

NEWS REPORT

When writing your news report, consider the following points:

- Study the headline and picture to get an idea for your news report.
- Before you begin to write, think of some facts and information (the 5Ws) to include in your news report. Remember you have to make up the facts and information in your report.
- Consider using quotations from participants or bystanders in your report.
- Divide your news report appropriately into short paragraphs.
- Use connecting words between ideas, sentences and paragraphs to help the reader follow and understand your news report.
- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation so that your news report is clear and easy to read.

WRITING C

| Task: | Write a news report based on the headline and picture below. |
| Purpose and Audience: | to report on an event for the readers of a newspaper |
## APPENDIX D2

### THE FIVE “W” ‘S + H

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>WHAT</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>WHEN</td>
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<td>WHERE</td>
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<td>WHY</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX D3

## REVISING AND EDITING A NEWS REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>MET</th>
<th>NOT MET</th>
<th>SUGGESTED FOR IMPROVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. the headline is short and &quot;newsy&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. the &quot;lead&quot; catches the reader’s interest</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. the “nutgraph” concisely answers the five “W’s” + h</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. the body of the report is well organized</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. linking words and phrases help ideas flow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. linking words and phrases help ideas flow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. grammar, punctuation and spelling and correct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>